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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A self-destructing document or e-mail messaging system is provided that automatically destroys documents or e-mail messages at a predetermined time by attaching a "virus" to the document or e-mail message. A virus in the form of a Trojan horse is attached to file (such as an e-mail message or document) when it is created. The virus contains a portion of executable code or an executable program which instructs the computer to overwrite and/or delete the file to which the virus is attached at a desired time. Since the virus is attached to the file, it will travel with the file even when the file is copied, forwarded, or saved to disks or tape drives.

SECRET